



NOAA FY 2000 Budget Request Fact Sheet

LANDS LEGACY INITIATIVE



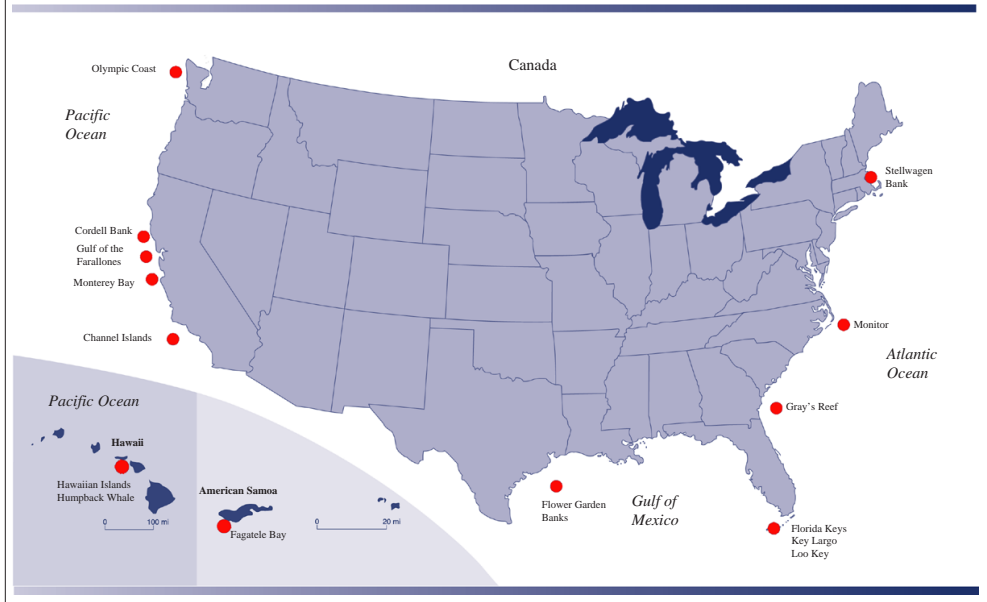
Marine Sanctuaries: Our Special Ocean Places

NOAA is requesting an increase of \$15 million to strengthen NOAA's protection of the nation's only system of marine protected areas: the 12 National Marine Sanctuaries. These nationally significant coastal and ocean ecosystems provide extraordinary economic, recreational, educational, scientific and aesthetic value to local coastal communities and visitors from around the world. NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries request is a key component of the Administration's FY 2000 Lands Legacy Initiative, and complements other Lands Legacy investments seeking to help protect and restore our valuable ocean and coastal resources.

The Challenge of Our Marine Sanctuaries

As the nation's trustee for these invaluable natural and cultural resources, NOAA has a challenging responsibility: to conserve, for the use and enjoyment of future generations, these complex marine ecosystems in the face of increasingly severe environmental threats. In recent years, the world has witnessed

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries



Map of the National Marine Sanctuaries.

drastic declines in the viability of many marine ecosystems due to land-based pollution, habitat loss, over-harvesting, global climate change and diseases.

Meeting that Challenge

Exploring, understanding, and cataloguing the diverse life within our Sanctuaries will better position us to make informed management decisions in the future. The proposed increase will enable the agency not only to effectively meet these conservation challenges, but will position NOAA to responsibly expand the sanctuary system and be able to protect more of our ocean's diverse natural and cultural treasures. To reach this goal, NOAA will embark on three related endeavors to ensure the viability of these special ocean places:

1. Enhance Conservation of Existing Sanctuaries. The funding will greatly strengthen the operational capabilities of each Sanctuary to fulfill its conservation mandate. Specific management improvements will include:

- strengthening our ability to address emerging environmental threats and work closer with communities and constituents to resolve user conflicts;

NOAA Budget

FY 2000
Change
\$M

National Ocean Service

Ocean Resource Conservation and Assessment

(Coastal Dredging and Restoration)

\$10

(Coral Reef Restoration)

\$10

Ocean & Coastal Management

(Coastal Zone Management Program)

\$32

(National Estuarine Research Reserves System)

\$ 3

(National Marine Sanctuaries)

\$12

National Marine Fisheries Service

Conservation and Management Operations

(Fisheries Habitat Restoration)

\$23

Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction Account

(National Estuarine Research Reserves System)

\$12

(National Marine Sanctuaries)

\$ 3

NOAA Lands Legacy Initiative - - Total

\$105

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Big Sur at Monterey Bay NMS

- mapping and monitoring critical habitats, such as coral reefs and kelp beds, and water quality, to better understand the biodiversity within each sanctuary;
- research to understand and predict the responses of these complex ecosystems to natural and human-induced change;
- bringing to life our nation's submerged cultural heritage while ensuring its preservation; and
- developing a comprehensive facilities plan for the program that prioritizes needs and opportunities at individual sites.

The result will be protection for some of the nation's most unique ecosystems, including the only extensive barrier coral reef system and other important coral reefs in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and the Pacific. This will also help to conserve America's most significant populations of, and habitats for, humpback, right, and blue whales, and other important marine mammal colonies in the Pacific. In addition, important cultural resources including historic shipwrecks in the Florida Keys and the Pacific, and the Civil War ironclad, the Monitor, will be protected for future generations.

2. Expand Environmental Education and Outreach Efforts.

Marine Sanctuaries achieve conservation through many means, including educating the general public. NOAA will expand and improve environmental education programs that increase public awareness of our marine ecosystems and help citizens understand how to minimize the impacts of human activities on them.

One of the most significant hurdles to interpreting and understanding the value of the unique and significant resources of the National Marine Sanctuaries is their offshore locations, which limits direct access for most of the public. Crucial to appreciating these resources and their importance is a direct link between

the resources and the people. Currently, the program has no means to provide this visitor experience. A central element of the education and outreach strategy will be a network of regional visitor centers, where the public and environmental decisionmakers can gain information on major conservation issues. This would be accomplished when ever possible, through cooperative centers that would take advantage of already existing aquaria, museums, and other appropriate facilities through partnerships. For example, within the \$15 million increase, an increase of \$3 million is requested for projects in FY 2000 that would include development of a visitor center for NOAA's Florida Keys NMS in partnership with the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on surplus Navy property in Key West; and potential development of outreach/education facilities co-located within aquaria at the Monterey Bay and Stellwagen Bank Sanctuaries. The result will be a system of public visitors centers that support an expanded marine education and outreach effort for the nation's most significant marine protected areas.

3. Carefully Plan Growth of the Sanctuary System. The twelve existing Sanctuaries represent a valuable first step in conserving the nation's great coastal and ocean habitats. A thirteenth sanctuary, Thunder Bay in Lake Huron, is under development and expected to be designated by FY 2000. Other areas deserve protection as well. The additional funding will allow NOAA to develop and initiate a carefully considered, science-based process to work with coastal communities, states, and other stakeholders to identify and evaluate potential new sites.

Together, these unprecedented initiatives made possible by the Lands Legacy Initiative will result in major advances in the conservation and protection of the nation's great ocean places.

NOAA's Role

NOAA is uniquely qualified to serve as the nation's trustee for the great ocean places. In addition to more than 25 years of experience managing these sites under the statutory mandate of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, NOAA has the comprehensive scientific and management expertise needed to ensure that these complex environmental challenges are met, and that management of these sites is carried out effectively for their long-term protection.

NOAA has historically worked closely with other partners within the federal, state and local governments, in academia, and in the private sector to meet the complex challenges of conserving ocean ecosystems. The funds will strengthen those ties by building capacity both within NOAA and among its conservation partners.

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